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TAGS: PREL ECON TU SY I2

SUBJECT: FM ZEBARI: TURKEY MORE REALISTIC, SYRIA RIPE FOR REGIME CHANGE

REF: 05 ANKARA 7271

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: FM Hoshyar Zebari told the Ambassador January 9 that the Turkish government has become far more realistic in its dealings with Iraq's Kurdish region. Zebari said that Turkish trade with the region is now over \$3 billion per year. The Kurdish region has crossed several "red lines" with no Turkish response, said Zebari. He added that the U.S. and EU should exploit the call for regime change in Syria made by former Syrian VP Khaddam. END SUMMARY.

Turkey Still Concerned about KDSP and KCP Parties

¶2. (C) Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari said that Turkish Ambassador Unal Cevikoz recently complained about two political parties in Iraq, which Turkey says are linked to the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) (reftel). FM Zebari told the Ambassador that Turkey's concerns about the Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (KDSP) and the Kurdistan Construction Party (KCP) and their links to the PKK, though valid, are overstated. The parties received very few votes (around one thousand) in the December 15 election and pose little threat to anyone. Zebari said Cevikoz believes that U.S. inaction allows these parties to continue operating in Iraq, despite Zebari's assurance to him that only the Independent Election Commission of Iraq (IECI) can take action to outlaw any party. (NOTE: Post unsuccessfully pressed the IECI to delist the KDSP prior to the December 15 election. END NOTE.) Zebari said the GOI will take action against the parties but only after the new government is settled.

¶3. (C) Zebari stated that, despite their complaints, the Turks now are more realistic in their dealings with the Kurdish region. According to Zebari, the Turks realize that the Turcoman population in Iraq is far less than the 3 million previously claimed. Turkish trade with the Kurdish region now exceeds \$3 billion per year, second only to trade with Iran (\$5 billion). Although the Kurdish region has crossed several Turkish "red lines," Zebari said that Turkey has not responded. (NOTE: Zebari did not specify, however, what these "red lines" are. END NOTE.)

Syria Ripe for Regime Change

¶4. (C) Zebari characterized the statements made by former Syrian Vice-President Abdul Khaddam about President Bashar Al-Asad as very serious. Zebari said that Bashar would give evidence to the UN inquiry into the death of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri but would do so slowly. Zebari opined that

the EU and U.S. should exploit Khaddam's call for regime change in Damascus. The Muslim Brotherhood, Zebari said, will not necessarily take over the government. He predicted that Iran will support Syria in this dispute.

KHALILZAD